

FLOOD CONTROL

JANUARY 31, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. WILSON of Louisiana, from the Committee on Flood Control, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 12004]

The Committee on Flood Control, to which was referred H. R. 12004, after public hearings on and full consideration of the bill, report it to the House with the recommendation that it do pass. The bill reads as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to cause an investigation, examination, and survey to be made, and estimates of the costs of such controlled and regulated spillway or spillways as may be necessary for the diversion and control of a sufficient volume of the excess flood waters of the Mississippi River between Red River Landing and Fort Jackson in Louisiana, in order to prevent the waters of said river exceeding stages of approximately sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty feet on the Carrollton gauge at New Orleans, and of approximately forty-six, forty-seven, and forty-eight feet on the gauge at Simmesport on the Atchafalaya outlet.

SEC. 2. The sum of \$25,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be, and the same is hereby, authorized to be appropriated to be expended under the direction of the Secretary of War and the supervision of the Chief of Engineers to carry out the objects and purposes of this Act.

The purpose of this bill is to secure an examination and survey, under the direction of the Secretary of War and the Chief of Engineers, with an estimate of the cost of a spillway or spillways on the Mississippi River below Red River Landing in Louisiana and on the Atchafalaya outlet, for the diversion and control of excess flood waters of the Mississippi River. By excess flood waters is meant that volume of water that may not be safely confined within the levees and thus carried to the Gulf.

The hearings before your committee established substantially the following facts:

1. That under existing flood control law and with the appropriations made by Congress and the contributions of local interests,

being the States involved and the levee organizations therein, the entire levee line from Rock Island, Ill., to Red River in Louisiana will be practically completed up to Mississippi River Commission grade and section within the next four or five years. This is also true of the levee line below Red River Landing in Louisiana.

This means that any flood of a volume heretofore known can be safely confined within the levees to Red River—often referred to as Old River—which is the only remaining unclosed natural outlet or spillway. In high stages of the Mississippi River excess flood waters are here diverted through Old River into the Atchafalaya and thence to the Gulf.

All engineers agree that it would not be practical to construct a spillway or waste weir north of this point, because any water so diverted from the Mississippi River must be returned into the main channel, while south of Red River such flood waters could be conducted by a shorter route directly to the Gulf.

2. That the method of controlling the flood waters of the Mississippi River by the construction of levees and revetting its banks has been successful from Rock Island, Ill., to Red River in Louisiana in so far as the system has been completed, and has met the expectations of the advocates of the levee system and fulfilled the predictions of the engineers dealing with the problem.

But the closure of natural outlets and the reclamation of storage basins made available for habitation and cultivation by the construction of levees have necessarily increased the rapidity of the run-off and confined the floods of the river into a more restricted channel, thereby increasing flood heights as the work has proceeded down the river. This was expected.

On account of this necessary result it has been urged by many able engineers conversant with the problem that after the flood waters have been carried within the levees to a point sufficiently near the Gulf to make the diversion of a portion thereof through controlled spillways practical that such a course would be necessary and should be undertaken. In fact, extended investigations have been made and much important data collected upon that question by the Mississippi River Commission and the Chief of Engineers. It may be said that the preliminary examination has been made, and that the point has been reached where a survey such as provided for in this bill should be completed.

3. Your committee was much impressed by the showing made at the hearings by engineers representing the State of Louisiana and the city of New Orleans that it would be practical to increase the discharge capacity of the Atchafalaya outlet and thereby regulate flood heights in such a way as to bring greater safety to the territory both above and below that point, and therefore this phase of the survey requested is important and desirable.

4. The hearings made evident the grave apprehension felt by those living in the area south of Red River in Louisiana, and especially in the city of New Orleans, as to the inadequacy of levees to afford full protection on account of the rapidly increasing flood heights in recent years, and also the conviction and belief that controlled and regulated spillways would afford ample protection and insure safety. The gravity of this problem was urged before your committee when the flood control act of 1923 was under consideration. The then chair-

men, Mr. Rodenberg, of Illinois, in his report referred to the matter as follows:

As the country above has been developed and drainage districts created which precipitate the surplus water into the river, the flood level in the lower reaches of the river has continually and progressively been elevated.

Due to this fact, many people of Louisiana, and particularly of New Orleans, have advocated other methods of controlling the floods in addition to those heretofore employed by the commission. The necessity of regulated spillways below Red River, both above and below the city of New Orleans, was urged upon the committee with great earnestness and force.

The committee did not undertake in that measure to provide for additional surveys.

If the survey now requested should demonstrate that flood heights upon the lower river can be regulated by controlled spillways at reasonable cost, then some 2,700 square miles of land in the Atchafalaya and Tensas Basins might be reclaimed and 12,000 square miles on the Mississippi River below Red River, now highly cultivated and thickly populated, would be made more secure. The property values involved are more than \$2,000,000,000, with an estimated population of more than a million people, and this includes the city of New Orleans, with a population of more than 400,000 people and property assets of more than \$1,000,000,000.

The gravity and importance of the situation is well established by the united support given this bill by the people in Louisiana, and this is evidenced by the fact that at a convention of all the levee boards in that State held at Baton Rouge, La., on January 12, 1925, the bill was unanimously indorsed, the resolution relating thereto being as follows:

Whereas it is recognized that the levee system is the primary defense of the lands of Louisiana against floods from the Mississippi River; and

Whereas bank protection in the form of mattress work and revetment is essential to the safety and stability of all levees in locations more or less secure; and

Whereas below Red River Landing, and especially in the territory adjacent to New Orleans, the conditions of the foundations upon which the levees rest limit the height to which they may be built, and thus make it imperative to adopt other and additional relief measures for a proper safeguard against increasing flood heights; and

Whereas the flood waters of the Mississippi River and its major tributaries flowing through Louisiana do not originate in Louisiana, but do wholly originate in all the States comprising the broad Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Valleys, whose lands drain into streams tributary to the Mississippi, thus compelling attention by the National Government to the problem of flood control in all its phases: Therefore, be it

Resolved by the levee boards of Louisiana in meeting assembled, That the Federal Government be urged to continue its levee program and to increase its yearly appropriation for levee work to the end that better progress be made; that more suitable and much larger appropriations be made for bank protection than are now made; that H. R. 12004, by Hon. Riley J. Wilson, be indorsed; and that the prevention of the river exceeding a stage of 16 at New Orleans be recommended.

There were presented to your committee resolutions of indorsement of this bill adopted by the Safe River Committee of 100, New Orleans, La.; the New Orleans Association of Commerce, New Orleans, La.; the National Flood Prevention and River Regulation Commission, New Orleans, La.; the Commission Council of New Orleans, La.; the Young Men's Business Club of New Orleans, La.; the Chamber of Commerce of Alexandria, La.

H. R. 12004, upon which hearings were held and which is favorably reported by your committee, is in substance the same as H. R. 11082.

Both bills were submitted to the Chief of Engineers and his letters in respect thereto are as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
January 28, 1925.

1. Respectfully returned to the chairman of Committee on Flood Control, House of Representatives, together with the following bills:

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6. H. R. 11082, Sixty-eighth Congress, second session, authorizes "an investigation, examination, and survey for the control of excess flood waters of the Mississippi River below Red River Landing in Louisiana and on the Atchafalaya outlet, by the construction and maintenance of controlled and regulated spillway or spillways, and for other purposes," and authorizes an appropriation of \$25,000 for that purpose. The advisability of the construction of regulated spillways for the control of floods on the Mississippi River has been investigated by the department several times, the first examination being reported to Congress in the Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1881, found on page 2720 et seq. In view of the numerous preliminary examinations which have been made for spillways, it is believed that the provision requiring that preliminary examination report be submitted to Congress can be considered by the department as having been met. It has also been ascertained that the cost of the survey specified by the bill will not be in excess of \$25,000. I therefore believe that the bill might well be amended so as to authorize a survey only for this purpose, and as so amended no objection is seen to its passage so far as the interests of this department are concerned, should Congress so desire.

H. TAYLOR,
Major General, Chief of Engineers.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 31, 1925.

Hon. RILEY J. WILSON,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. WILSON: Confirming the information given to you orally this morning, I take pleasure in saying that the bill introduced by you in the House of Representatives, January 28, 1925, (H. R. 12004, Sixty-eighth Congress, second session), authorizing an investigation, examination, and survey for the control of excess flood waters of the Mississippi River below Red River Landing in Louisiana, appears to fully meet the suggestions made in my indorsement of January 28, 1925, returning to the chairman of the Committee on Flood Control, House of Representatives, certain bills, among others H. R. 11082, Sixty-eighth Congress, second session, which also proposed an investigation similar to that proposed in the bill now under consideration.

The additional heights below which the water is to be controlled given in H. R. 12004, over those included in H. R. 11082, will not involve a sufficient increase in the cost of the work to make it necessary to change the amount appropriated.

Very sincerely,

H. TAYLOR,
Major General, Chief of Engineers.

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